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The situation in the Middle East

The question of Palestine

Letter dated 8 June 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Further to our note dated 29 May 2001, I have the honour to transmit the statement of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, at the Extraordinary Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Member States on the grave situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, held in Doha, Qatar, on 26 May 2001 (see annex)*.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as an addendum to document A/55/974-S/2001/543 of the General Assembly, under agenda items 40 and 41, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Adel Ali **Al-Khal**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

* Annex is being circulated in the languages of submission only (Arabic, English and French).

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Annex to the letter dated 8 June 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic, English and French]

Statement of His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, at the Extraordinary Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Member States on the grave situation prevailing in the Palestinian Territories, Doha, State of Qatar, 3 Rabiul Awal 1422 H (26 May 2001)

Your Excellency brother Yasser Arafat
President of the State of Palestine,

Your Royal Highnesses and Excellencies,

Dear Brothers,

Allow me, please, to welcome you to this extraordinary meeting which is being held under exceedingly critical conditions. I need not emphasize the serious escalation of violence in the region due to the oppressive measures to constant Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people.

The initiative to convene this meeting came both as a response to a call from President Arafat for a commitment on the part of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to perform its responsibilities vis-a-vis the serious events in Palestine and the speedy deterioration of the situation there.

Under these difficult conditions, the issue confronting us is the following:

How should we support the Palestinian people? How should we protect them from aggression? It is alright to condemn and to sympathize but how do we convince the Palestinians that we support them in their plight? How do we make our thoughts and stands conform with them in a concrete rather than a wishful manner? It certainly will not be enough, under the present conditions, to reiterate words of condemnation and disapproval, nor to issue recommendations that cannot be translated into reality.

God bless the people of Lebanon who found their own way of liberating their territory. Would they have achieved this and had they been content with reiterating words and slogans as we have done in the past and still do (at present)? Would the Israeli government, headed by Sharon, have committed its atrocities against the Palestinian people had it not realized in advance that the Islamic, and in particular, the Arab reaction will not exceed condemnation and disapproval and that we do not have the power to implement peace?

What is happening in Palestinian territory at present is, first and foremost, a result of the feeling of oppression, frustration and despair due to Israeli atrocities. Since the initiation of the Intifada, Israeli reaction has always been excessive in its violence and savagery. There is no moral, political nor security justification for responding to stone-throwing by plane, tank and missile bombings and for using advanced weaponry against an unarmed people who possess nothing but their faith in the justice of their cause and belief in their right to a life of freedom and dignity.

The Intifada will continue and the Palestinian people will rely on themselves entirely, knowing perhaps that their brothers in other Islamic countries will supply nothing more than condemnation of Israeli aggression and some financial support.

Our aim is peace. If the Intifada is the force which will impose it, then it is our duty, Muslims and Arabs alike, to adopt a courageous stand that offers it material and moral support. The Intifada has certainly earned our backing, its heroes have made us proud of their courage and caused us to deeply grieve its martyrs. Serious and effective measures should, therefore, be adopted to support our brothers and supply them with needs. We should offer them the means to alleviate their plight and resist an aggression that reflects a serious imbalance of powers. While doing so, we do not only help the Palestinians but we protect our holy sites and rights.

Brother Muslims,

It is our duty to expose to the international community the stark contradiction and double standards practiced by Israel against international legitimacy. This is a country, a member of the United Nations, that flagrantly violates all its commitments and reneges on its pledges.

The international community displays increasing concern with human rights and the development of international law in this and other related fields such as the agreements governing civilian rights and protection under occupation. We hoped, therefore, for a firm stand by the international community regarding the atrocities committed daily by Israel against the unarmed civilians, women and children of the occupied Palestinian territories. What we and the whole world are viewing daily in Palestine, however, drives us to question the credibility of principles and values which we embraced and committed ourselves to as members of the international community.

Hence, despite our appreciation for the international response to the Mitchell Committee Report, which was welcomed by the Palestinian Authority and adopted by the USA to guide its work approach, our experience with Israel demonstrating its indifference to international resolutions and the international community's inability to force it to comply with them, gives us cause for concern that the report might meet with the same fate of international resolutions and agreements it signed.

That is why, I hope that we will come out of this meeting with a unified Islamic strategy by activating the resolutions of the Doha Summit adapted to the current conditions so as to provide all forms of political and material support for the Palestinian people in its legitimate struggle, whilst calling on the United Nations, and particularly the UN Security Council, to provide international protection for this people and force Israel to put an end to all settlement activities in the Palestinian territories and all forms of expansion and confiscation, and to cease its continued violations of Islamic and Christian holy places. It is also my hope that we will work hard to energize the role of the two sponsors of the peace process, the United States of America and the Republic of the Russian Federation, so that they would assume their basic responsibilities in this direction.

The United States of America, with all its resources, has played a central role in sponsoring the peace process since the 1991 Madrid Conference, which helped reinforce confidence in its ability to take the process to a successful conclusion, thus encouraging many Arab states to participate in it. Therefore, it is imperative that the United States of America should honor its obligations with regard to the Arab Israeli conflict, which cannot end without the full Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories and the recognition of the legitimate, national rights of their Arab people.

I therefore call on the American Administration and on George Bush personally to urgently and promptly intervene to put an end to this worsening situation, which we can no longer stand by and watch, and to compel Israel to end its aggression, return, without preconditions, to commitment to the principles on which the peace process was based, and resume the negotiations at the point at which they had stopped.

Israel cannot remain outside international legitimacy and should not be exempt from the application of UN resolutions and its conventions and the principles of human rights, for if these resolutions, conventions, and principles are applicable, why are they not applicable to Israel?

Arab and Islamic states were besieged in the name of international legitimacy and so we may well ask why was this legitimacy applicable to some Arab and Islamic states, while it is not applicable to Israel?

Where is this international legitimacy, which cannot provide security for a defenseless people as is the case now in the West Bank and Gaza Strip? We are all aware of and we repeatedly point to double standards, but these double standards are applied to the weaker nations.

If these resolutions, conventions, and principles are applicable everywhere and to all crises and conflicts, they should be applicable more than anywhere else to the Arab Israeli conflict and the Palestinian cause, for the Palestinian people, like all other peoples of the world, is entitled to live in liberty and dignity and enjoy security, protection, peace, and prosperity in its homeland and on its territory whilst Israel should today choose whether it wants to live in the region in security and peace or to have this conflict continue for decades and generations to come with all the consequent catastrophes and tragedies for all the countries and peoples of the region.

Brothers,

To face these critical conditions being endured by our brothers in Palestine, I propose that the Ministerial Committee emanating from the Ninth Islamic Summit Conference should resume its task immediately by calling for an extraordinary session of the UN Security Council to be devoted to the examination of the grave situation in the Palestinian territories. The Committee should urgently travel to the capitals of the five permanent member-states of the Security Council, the European Union, and the United Nations in order to discuss the initiation of the necessary modes and mechanisms to address this deteriorating situation. I also believe that it is appropriate that the Committee should consider itself permanently in session to monitor developments and propose future steps.

May Allah have mercy on the souls of those who have chosen Shehada, or martyrdom, and realized their ambition, and may He grant victory to a people who have believed and who have fought and continue to fight to forcefully gain their right to a life of liberty, dignity, and independence.

Wassalamu Alikum War`ahmatullah Wabarakatuh.